

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An electronic rebate system comprising:

at least one electronic tag device associated with products, wherein each distinct product is associated with at least one electronic tag, and wherein said electronic tag stores product-identification-information;

at least one electronic reading device configured to retrieve information from said electronic tag;

a first computer in communication with said electronic reading device to retrieve said product-identification-information stored in an electronic tag associated with a product being purchased by a customer at a point of sale;

said first computer further configured to use said product-identification-information to acquire rebate-claim-information; and

said first computer further configured to communicate with a second computer and to transfer to said second computer said rebate-claim-information and wherein said transfer occurs substantially contemporaneous with the purchase; and

wherein said second computer is configured to process and validate a rebate claim with said rebate-claim-information, and transfer rebate-claim-status information to said first computer, said first computer configured to communicate said rebate-claim-status information to the customer.

2. (Original) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said electronic tag device is an RFID smart tag.

3. (Original) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said electronic reading device is an RFID STR device.

4. (Currently Amended) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, further comprising a customer interface configured with said first computer to receive and communicate said ~~product-rebate-information from at least one of said first computer and said second computer~~ rebate-claim-status information to the customer.

5. (Currently Amended) An electronic rebate system as in claim 4, wherein said ~~product-rebate-information~~ rebate-claim-status information is one of real-time information and near real-time information.

6. (Original) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said product-identification-information comprises at least one member from the group consisting of: (a) product model number; (b) product serial number; (c) rebate promotion code; (d) product name; (e) identification code; (f) proof-of-purchase code; and (g) an electronic address.

7. (Original) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said rebate-claim-information comprises at least one member from the group consisting of: (a) customer name; (b) customer's financial institution tracking number; (c) customer's account number at customer's financial institution; (d) customer's mailing address; (e) customer's e-mail address; (f) customer's phone number; (g) customer's credit card number; (h) customer's debit card number; (i) a pin code; (j) an authorization code; (k) customer's electronic signature; (l) product model number; (m) product serial number; (n) rebate promotion code; (o) product name; (p) an electronic address; (q) proof-of-purchase code; (r) date of purchase; (s) time of purchase; (t) product identification code; (u) product information; (v) retailer name; (w) retailer location; (x) retailer identification code; and (y) transaction code.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) An electronic rebate system as in ~~claim 8~~ claim 1, wherein said first computer is further configured to generate at least one of (a) rebate status documentation comprising at least part of said rebate status information wherein said rebate status documentation is given to the customer at the point of sale and (b) a receipt comprising at least part of said rebate status information wherein said receipt is given to the customer at the point of sale.

10. (Currently Amended) An electronic rebate system as in ~~claim 8~~ claim 1, wherein said rebate status information comprises at least one member from the group consisting of: (a) rebate claim accepted notice; (b) rebate claim denied notice; (c) rebate claim denied code; (d) rebate claim reference code; (e) EFT transaction code; (g) e-mail notice; and (h) rebate check number.

11. (Original) An electronic rebate system as in claim 1, wherein said first computer is a retailer central computer.

12. (Original) An electronic rebate system as in claim 11, wherein said second computer is one of (a) a manufacturer central computer and (b) a rebate processing center central computer.

Claims 13 through 21: **Cancelled**

22. (Currently Amended) An electronic rebate ~~processing~~ system as in ~~claim 18~~ claim 1, ~~wherein said second remote computer is~~ further comprising a portable customer computer in communication with ~~at least one of said first computer and said first remote computer via a wireless communication connection~~ for communicating said rebate-claim-status information.

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Currently Amended) An electronic rebate ~~processing~~ system as in ~~claim 23~~ claim 11, wherein said ~~first~~ second computer is further configured to initiate an electronic fund transfer from a first bank account into a second bank account in the amount of the rebate.

25. (Cancelled)

26. (Currently Amended) An electronic rebate ~~processing~~ system as in ~~claim 23~~ claim

1, wherein said first or second computer is configured to transmit an electronic mail message to a predefined electronic mail address wherein said electronic mail message contains at least part of said rebate-claim-status information.

27. (Currently Amended) A method for electronically making a rebate claim, said method comprising:

providing at least one electronic reading device configured to retrieve product-information stored in an electronic tag associated with a purchased product;

configuring a first computer to communicate with said electronic reading device to retrieve at least part of said product-information stored in at least one electronic tag associated with a product being purchased by a customer at a point of sale thereby acquiring product-identification-information;

configuring said first computer to acquire rebate-claim-information using at least part of said product-identification-information;

configuring said first computer to initiate a data transfer of said rebate-claim-information to a second computer; and

configuring said second computer to process and validate the rebate claim with said rebate-claim-information, and transfer rebate-claim-status information to said first computer, said first computer further configured to communicate said rebate-claim-status information to the customer.

28. (Original) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said electronic tag device is an RFID smart tag.

29. (Original) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said electronic reading device is an RFID STR device.

30. (Original) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said first computer is a retailer central computer.

31. (Original) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said second computer is one of a manufacturer central computer and a third party computer.

32. (Original) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said product-identification-information comprises at least one member from the group consisting of: (a) product model number; (b) product serial number; (c) rebate promotion code; (d) product name; (e) identification code; (f) proof-of-purchase code; (g) an electronic address; and (h) a URL link.

33. (Original) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in claim 27, wherein said rebate-claim-information comprises at least one member from the group consisting of: (a) customer name; (b) a financial institution tracking number; (c) an account number at a financial institution; (d) customer's mailing address; (e) customer's e-mail address; (f) customer's phone number; (g) customer's credit card number; (h) customer's debit card number; (i) a pin code; (j) an authorization code; (k) customer's electronic signature; (l) product model number; (m) product serial number; (n) rebate promotion code; (o) product name; (p) an electronic address; (q) proof-of-purchase code; (r) date of purchase; (s) time of purchase; (t) product identification code; (u) product information; (v) retailer name; (w) retailer location; (x) retailer identification code; and (y) transaction code.

34. (Cancelled)

35. (Currently Amended) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in ~~claim 34~~ claim 27, wherein said rebate status information comprises at least one member from the group consisting of: (a) rebate accepted notice; (b) rebate denied notice; (c) rebate denied code; (d) rebate reference code; (e) EFT transaction code; (f) e-mail notification notice; and (h) rebate check number.

36. (Currently Amended) A method for electronically making a rebate claim as in ~~claim~~ claim 27, wherein said first computer is further configured to generate at least one of (a) rebate status documentation and (b) a receipt, wherein said rebated status documentation and said receipt comprise at least part of said rebate status information and is given to said customer at said point of sale.

Claims 37 through 50: Cancelled

51. (Original) A method for electronically processing a rebate claim, said method comprising:

- associating at least one electronic tag device with products, wherein each distinct product is associated with at least one electronic tag, and wherein said electronic tag is configured to store product-information;

- receiving a rebate claim comprising rebate-claim-information for a product being purchased by a customer at a point of sale;

- evaluating the validity of said rebate claim using at least part of said rebate-claim-information; and

- transmitting rebate-claim-status information to a computing device at the point of sale wherein at least part of said rebate-claim-status information is presented to said customer at said point of sale.

52. (Original) A method for electronically processing a rebate request as in claim 51, wherein said electronic tag device is an RFID smart tag.

53. (Original) A method for electronically processing a rebate request as in claim 51, wherein said rebate-claim-status information is transmitted to a hand held computing device at the point of sale.

54. (Original) A method for electronically processing a rebate request as in claim 51, further comprising the step of transmitting an electronic mail message to a predefined

electronic mail address wherein said electronic mail message contains at least part of said rebate-claim-status information.

55. (Original) A method for electronically processing a rebate request as in claim 51, further comprising the step of initiating an electronic fund transfer to a predefined bank account upon validating the rebate claim, wherein said electronic fund transfer is in the amount of the rebate.

56. (Original) A method for electronically processing a rebate request as in claim 55, wherein said electronic fund transfer is an automated clearing house transfer.

57. (Original) A method for electronically processing a rebate request as in claim 55, wherein the status of said electronic fund transfer transaction is indicated on a receipt given to the customer at the point of sale.

Claims 58 through 65: **Cancelled**